

1. How did you get into politics and what led you to the governor's office as deputy chief of staff?

During about a four year span early in my life from 1987-1991, I worked for Senator Trent Lott on the Coast during his first senatorial campaign, interned in his Washington, D.C. office, became active in student politics at MSU, and went to work for Governor Fordice as Deputy Press Secretary. During that time politics went from being an interest to a profession.

Making a return trip to the Governor's Mansion was completely unplanned. I was very happy at Community Bank. The bottom line is Governor Barbour asked... and he is a hard person to turn down.

2. What is the greatest difference between working for a private company such as Community Bank and working in the public eye with the governor?

First of all there is no comparison with working at Community Bank. You just don't find better people anywhere. It is a very special place to me.

There are, however, distinct differences between a Governor's Office and virtually any other place of business. First, everything you do is subject to public scrutiny - and rightfully so by the way. That naturally brings added pressure. The only other profession that compares is probably college football coaching. Everybody seems to have an opinion about how best to do politics and football - and rightfully so by the way.

The other difference is just the variety and speed of the workload. You can see subjects as diverse as bonds, teachers, Medicaid, disaster preparation, judicial appointments, the highway patrol, economic development prospects, and farming all before lunch. In addition to that variety is the speed of it - especially as it regards

communications. It is difficult to do quarterly planning when each day is a brand new news cycle. It does matter what happened yesterday or what is going to happen tomorrow. The news cycle depends on immediacy, and it starts all over again every morning.

3. The Medicaid debate has been the forefront of the governor's first year. With the waivers now obtained, what will be the impact of the state's cutting PLAD?

PLAD recipients are going to have a safety net and Mississippi's Medicaid program is going to have significant savings as a result of this reform. Medicaid had doubled in cost in the five years before Governor Barbour took office - it could not sustain such growth. The Governor is streamlining the program so it will be available in the future for Mississippi's neediest citizens. The Division of Medicaid is reporting that they have almost completed enrolling all 48,000 of our PLAD recipients into alternative prescription drug coverage. This reform may have been confusing for some beneficiaries, but ultimately it has worked for them.

4. The governor has just announced new education initiatives. What does the governor hope to leave as his legacy in this area?

Unfortunately, in the past education debates in Mississippi have only been about funding levels. Governor Barbour wants a discussion about fundamental education reforms that produce results measured in student progress. Money is important, but teachers will tell you that discipline, accountability, local control and administrative support is just as important to improving our public schools.

5. What are the governor's top priorities with the next legislative session?

You will see Governor Barbour submit proposals to the Legislature in the areas of job creation, getting Mississippi's

budget in structural balance and reforming our public schools.

6. Back to a personal note, would you ever entertain running for public office?

After working for two governors and seeing the toll public office takes on a person in terms of time and stress that is an easy answer...No.